# Soviet Naval Antiship Missile Force: Developments and Capabilities

The cruise missile force has provided the Soviet Navy with a formidable antiship capability, but during the Sixties several factors arose which created new problems and challenges for it.

- The Soviet Navy was assigned broadened missions, including distant deployments where cruise missiles and their platforms—designed for operations in waters near the USSR—were less effective.
- Soviet planners began to give increased thought to the possibility that a war with the West might be limited—at least temporarily—to conventional weapons rather than escalating directly into a strategic nuclear exchange.
- Western naval powers placed added emphasis on the development of cruise missiles and cruise missile defenses.

The Soviets have responded to these problems by developing new missile systems in an attempt to maintain the tactical proficiency of the force. Most of these missiles offer only marginal improvements over older missiles, but others display new and unique capabilities. Although these new missiles provide the Soviet Navy with better antiship capabilities, several inherent weaknesses in the employment of the force remain. Among these are the limited ocean surveillance and targeting capabilities of the Soviet Navy and poor logistic support.

Soviet research and development efforts on new antiship missiles continue at a strong pace. As with earlier efforts some of these ongoing development programs appear to be only extensions of existing cruise missile technology. Many, however, are innovative attempts to deal with some of the weaknesses still facing the Soviet Navy. These programs include a tactical sea-launched ballistic missile apparently designed for an antiship role and at least two missile systems that probably are for use against submarines.

Despite expected Soviet advances in antiship missiles, over time the development of better cruise missile defenses as well as the introduction of competitive cruise missile systems by the West probably will reduce the relative effectiveness of the Soviet cruise missile force. The Soviet force, nevertheless, is expected to remain a significant threat to Western naval forces into the Eighties.

SS-NX-12: This antiship cruise missile system has been in the test phase since at least June 1970.

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*COMMENT: The SS-NX-12 appears to be a replacement for the SS-N-3a submarine-launched cruise missile. The SS-NX-12 flies faster and farther than the SS-N-3a. It is also expected to employ an improved guidance and control system. When it becomes operational, the SS-NX-12 probably will be fitted on E-II and possibly some J class submarines.*

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